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How to promote Massidea.org activities to Russian universities to achieve collaboration in the future. Case: Massidea.org

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This thesis mainly concentrates on international marketing and e-mail marketing. The main objective of the study is to determine how to promote Massidea.org activities to Russian universities and how to use e-mail marketing for this purpose. One of the aims is to identify the problems that can occur during the marketing process and give possible solutions and advice on how to overcome these obstacles. Moreover, the thesis aims to identify how Russian universities need to be contacted in order to establish cooperation with them in the future.

A qualitative approach was taken to gathering information for this study and the research was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research allowed the author to gather deep and valuable information and through the semi-structured interviews feedback was obtained from the interviewees who shared their opinions, ideas, and views and gave comments during the discussions.

The thesis provides theoretical information on such fields as international marketing, marketing communications, e-mail marketing and social media. The theoretical section supports the research activities and provides general knowledge about the topic.

The process of contacting universities in Russia is described in the study. The results analysis and summary of the feedback are presented by the author. The thesis discusses the problems that occurred during the research and at the end of the thesis the writer gives recommendations on how to cope with them and makes conclusions.

The thesis is based on the Massidea.org concept, developed at Laurea University of Applied Sciences, and the process of writing the thesis was supported by the Massidea.org team.

Key words: Massidea.org, International Marketing, Russia, Social Media, E-mail Marketing

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1 Introduction

In the current labor market there is a trend towards increasing competition and in order to succeed in working life a worker needs to be well-educated and to develop the necessary skills and knowledge. To be competitive, students, as future workers, need to have problem-solving and communication skills and to be information literate. To help students develop the necessary skills new ways of learning and new approaches to educational innovations are being developed. (Schooling and Training - An Economic Perspective 2010)

In the modern world the role of web 2.0 technologies in the process of education has grown rapidly. Internet technologies can be used to support the learning process, improve educational practice, and help students develop competitive skills. (The Role of Web 2.0 Technologies in K-12 Education)

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) enables new ways of learning that were unavailable before. ICT can be used to access the necessary information, express one's ideas and share experiences and thus contribute to the educational process. For example, E-learning (electronic learning) allows interaction between students and teachers from different sides of the world and increases educational opportunities for the learners. (ICT and education: A critical role in human and social development. 2010)

Online social networks such as Wikipedia, Facebook, and YouTube have given people an opportunity to cooperate and communicate easier and faster. The process of interaction and sharing of information is now much easier than before. (Santonen 2010)

This thesis is based on Massidea.org project activities, created and developed in Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Espoo, Finland.

“Massidea.org is an open innovation community for sharing challenges, ideas and visions. It helps in creation of innovations and finding out existing problems. Its content is open to all individuals as well as to public sector and private companies. Massidea is not only a place to share opinions and views, but also an educational environment that provides opportunities for professional development to students and teachers”. (massidea.org/en)

1.1 Topic justification

The idea and the topic of the study were suggested by Massidea.org and the thesis process was supported by Massidea.org team.

First of all, this work is important for the development of Massidea.org, because it aims to help in developing a communication plan for starting collaboration with Russian universities and thus develop the network of Massidea's partners.

Secondly, this study is important for Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Massidea.org was developed in Laurea and marketing its activities can support and even improve Laurea's image in the educational field among other universities of applied sciences in Finland.

1.2 Purpose of the thesis

Massidea.org has already implemented virtual internships for students in cooperation with Universities in India and Denmark. Expanding to Russia would be an important step in its development and that is why Massidea is looking for new partners among universities in Russia.

First of all, taking into consideration Massidea's development process and plans for collaboration with potential partners, the main question of the thesis is how to market Massidea and its activities to the universities in Russia in order to establish cooperation with them in the future?

Secondly, one of the aims of the research is to explore how e-mail marketing can be used effectively for the purpose of promoting Massidea.org as well as building and supporting communication with potential partners.

Moreover, the intention of the study is to give advice on how to produce the most suitable offer describing the possibilities for collaboration and benefits of it to representatives of the Russian universities, who could in the future implement activities together with other partners of Massidea.

Furthermore, the study aims to identify possible problems that may appear during the process and find solutions for them.

1.3 Research approach

Different research possibilities for gathering information were considered by the author but a qualitative research approach was chosen for this study. It allowed the author to analyze information that was gathered using semi-structured interviews.

The data received by the author helped to make suggestions on improving and developing the offer of Massidea to universities in Russia.

1.4 Theoretical approach

The following topics are discussed in the theoretical sector of this thesis: international marketing and strategies, international marketing communications, marketing consumer services, social media and the use of e-mail (electronic mail) marketing.

These topics were chosen by the author because they provide a deep understanding of the international marketing environment and its activities.

Social media and service marketing are discussed in the theoretical part because Massidea bases its activities on an open internet resource to provide possibilities for communication, sharing ideas and challenges, as well as to provide educational services that can be implemented in different universities.

E-mail marketing is an important part of the theoretical discussion because it allowed the author not only to contact the universities and communicate the offer to the staff but also to receive feedback on the Massidea offer.

The theoretical background provided the writer with the ideas on how the process of marketing the Massidea concept and its services to foreign universities can be started.

1.5 Scope and limitations

The focus of the thesis is on international marketing and international marketing communications.

Marketing services internationally is under the scope of the thesis as well as social media and networks. Using e-mail to support marketing services is also discussed in the study.

International product and service management is excluded from the study. Distance learning is not discussed in the thesis. The study does not cover the tools that are used for distance education either.

The data gathering for the research analysis was implemented by contacting universities in Russia and interviewing lecturers and personnel responsible for international cooperation.

1.6 Structure of the study

The study is divided into 7 chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, results, empirical section, conclusion and recommendations, theoretical linkage and final words with a summary.

The first part includes the introduction, topic justification, purpose of the thesis, scope and limitations.

In the second part the literature review and summary of the theoretical framework are presented. They support the research activities and should provide a general understanding of the topic.

The research method and data collecting tools are discussed in the third chapter.

The fourth section includes empirical part and the findings of the study.

Conclusions, recommendations can be found in chapter five. Theoretical linkage is presented in the sixth chapter. Final words and summary are presented in the last chapter.

2 Theoretical background

This part of the thesis gives an overview of the existing literature which was used as a basis for the empirical section of the research. The theoretical knowledge supports the methodology used in the research.

2.1 International marketing

Doole and Lowe (2004, 5) define marketing as the “Management process responsible for identifying, anticipating and satisfying customer requirements profitably”.

In their opinion, marketing includes focusing on the needs and wants of customers as well as identifying the best method of satisfying those needs and wants, orienting the company towards the process of providing that satisfaction and meeting organizational objectives. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 5)

Another suggestion for defining international marketing is “the performance of business activities designed to plan, price, promote, and direct the flow of a company’s goods and services to consumers or users in more than one nation for profit” (Cateora, Gilly, Graham 2009, 9).

The difference between international and domestic marketing is that in the former marketing activities take place in more than one country and managers need to acquire new skills and abilities to fit into a new and more complex marketing environment (Doole & Lowe 2004, 6)

2.2 International marketing strategies

Sometimes firms developing international marketing strategies fail to succeed in the international markets they have targeted. There are some reasons why companies may fail to manage their international activities. One of the reasons is the inability to find the right market niches.

Sometimes companies' unwillingness to adapt and update products to local needs may lead to failure. If a company can not provide customers with unique products or can not manage local stakeholders it may have problems in the international market. It is also very important to assign the right people, choose the right partners and try to develop mutual trust and respect in order to succeed. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 31)

Moreover, firms need to be sensitive to changes in the international environment and be able to develop appropriate strategies to respond to those changes. Companies should identify the changes at an early stage and analyze the market.

The personal knowledge, skills and competences of the company's staff provide potential for development. For effective and successful operations companies need to know how to apply their employees' knowledge and skills in the international environment. "Effective knowledge management is critical for success". (Doole & Lowe 2004, 30)

Companies that plan to operate successfully in international markets need a clear international marketing strategy, which should be based on an understanding of the markets the company is going to compete in. Monitoring and evaluation is essential for operating in international markets. Some of the most important concepts in the implementation of a successful international strategy are financial innovation, networking and value-based marketing. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 30)

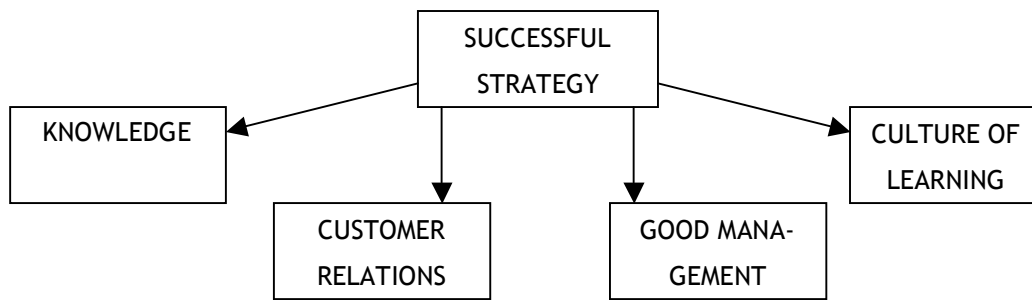


Figure 1. Three major components to successful strategies.(compiled by the author)

The figure shows that a thorough knowledge of international markets should give a clear international competitive focus, a strong competitive positioning and a strategic international perspective. To achieve an effective relationship strategy customer relations should be managed, a company should be committed to producing high-quality products and service, and to developing customer service throughout international markets. Companies must have effective monitoring and control procedures for all their international markets. To be successful firms need innovations, the desire and ability to learn. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 30)

2.3 International marketing communications

“Marketing communications are concerned with presenting and exchanging information with various individuals and organizations to achieve specific results” (Doole & Lowe 2004, 294). This means that the information must be accurately understood. In a domestic environment the process of marketing communications is difficult enough but the management of international marketing communications is even more challenging because of such factors as “the complexity of different market conditions, differences in media availability, languages, cultural sensitivities, regulations controlling advertising and sales promotions, and the challenge of providing adequate resourcing levels”. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 294)

For a company it is essential that all the staff are aware of the strategies, tactics, priorities and procedures of the firm to achieve the common goal and objectives. Communication may become unclear under the influence of cultural and language differences. Staff should be trained how to communicate and make decisions that support the main strategy. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 295)

International marketing communications have become nowadays very important within the marketing mix: Product, Price, Promotion, Place, People, Process, Physical Evidence (Geert Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions. 2008).

In addition, marketing communications are needed to communicate with a range of stakeholders and build higher levels of customer service (Doole & Lowe, 2004, 295).

International marketing communications are also used to provide customers with an easily recognizable brand image and to make one product or service distinctive from the others, which is sometimes challenging. A company can use a great variety of promotional tools to convince customers to buy its products and services. A challenging, but achievable goal for the company is to use those tools as cost effectively as possible. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 296)

A fundamental purpose of international marketing communications is to ensure that the intended message is transferred accurately from the sender to the receiver. For example, in advertising in an international market some companies fail in their attempt to communicate a message due to lack of cultural knowledge, inaccurate translation, lack of coordination of messages, such as press releases and advertising campaigns. This may lead to damage of the company's image as well as wasted efforts and resources. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 299)

Companies use standardization for corporate identity or global advertising campaigns. But to demonstrate cultural sensitivity and empathy to international customers firms adapt international communications to local markets. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 300)

One of the reasons for standardization is the fact that it allows staff time to be used more efficiently. Another reason is cost effectiveness. Standardization of communications provides customers with perceived added value when buying widely recognized brands. People prefer to buy familiar brands or use the services of a familiar company. This creates a feeling of confidence, trust and loyalty in the minds of customers. "Consumers and business-to-business customers often prefer internationally available products, with which they have become familiar through increased travel, radio and television communications and the written media. This familiarity has increased further because of the greater impact of telecommunications and IT." (Doole & Lowe 2004, 301)

Cultural differences should be managed when communicating with customers in other countries, since there is difference in responding to communication approaches by consumers from different cultures. There are reasons to adapt the communication strategy to local situations. Some of the reasons include the political and legal environment, such as prohibition of comparative advertising, advertising of alcohol, tobacco and products for children. "Many companies have to change their brand names because of different meanings they have when they have when they move to new markets". (Doole & Lowe 2004, 302)

Companies should be sensitive to cultural differences and sometimes make necessary changes in products, brand and advertising to adapt the product according to local taste and culture. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 303)

2.4 CRM in marketing

It is essential for any business to build and support long-term relationships with customers. Nowadays, technology allows companies to have details about their customers and thus develop a better communication with them. (Chaffey 2007, 41)

CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is computer software which enables staff in organizations to gather and use information about their customers to maintain and build relationship. Additionally, it helps to increase customers' loyalty and trust. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 326)

CRM allows a firm to concentrate its effort on customers who are more profitable and it is based on the principle that a company gets 80 per cent of its profit from 20 per cent of its customers (Doole & Lowe 2004, 419).

The purpose of CRM is to store the information such as contact names, telephone, e-mail (electronic mail addresses), type of business, purpose and dates of meetings or telephone calls. The status of the customer and the details of previous orders are stored in the data base of the company and employees, including salespersons and call centre staff, have easy access to this information. (Jobber & Lancaster 2006, 206)

CRM enables the company to co-ordinate all the communication between the company and the customer. "CRM companies offer a range of information-technology based services such as call centers, data analysis and website management". The main idea of using CRM is that company personnel have a single-customer point of view of each client. (Jobber & Lancaster 2006, 206)

CRM can also categorize customers based on their past profitability. The most profitable customers will be recognized and later get priority service and attractive deals. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 419)

However, CRM systems sometimes make broad generalizations about customers, their cultures and attitudes, which is a disadvantage of this system. Additionally, In some countries keeping information about customers is against privacy laws. Another problem with CRM systems is that companies analyze the data they received from past behavior of their customers and this information may not predict the future behavior. (Doole & Lowe 2004, 327)

2.5 Marketing consumer services

“Services tend to be more intangible, personalized, and custom-made than goods” (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 464).

Services often need to be marketed differently from goods. “While goods are typically distributed to the customer, services can be transferred across borders or originated abroad, and the service provider can be transferred to the customer or the customer can be transferred to the service territory”. (Czinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 464)

Not only products sometimes need adaptation for international consumer markets but services as well. Services are distinguished by four unique characteristics - intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability. They require special consideration. Services are intangible because they are performances or actions, they can not be seen, felt, tasted, or touched. (Zeithaml, Bitner & Gremler 2006, 22)

Services can not be inventoried and therefore changes in demand are often hard to manage. Demand on some services may vary depending on the season. For example, resort accommodation may be in high demand during the summer and have little demand in winter. Services are not easy to patent and therefore can be easily copied by competitors. Pricing a service can be challenging since it is hard to determine the actual cost of a unit of service. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 23)

Service is inseparable because its creation can not be separated from its consumption; most services are sold first, then produced and consumed simultaneously (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 23).

Since services are often produced and consumed at the same time, mass production is therefore difficult. The quality of service and customer satisfaction highly depend on the actions of employees and interactions between employees and customers. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 24)

Services are heterogeneous because they are individually produced and unique, no two services can be precisely alike. As a result, it is challenging to evaluate quality of the service. There are other factors that influence the quality of services, such as ability of a customer to articulate his or her needs or the ability and willingness of the personnel to satisfy those needs. All these factors make it complicated for a service manager to make sure that the service is being delivered the way it was originally planned and promoted. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 23)

Services are perishable because once created they can not be saved, stored, resold or returned but must be consumed simultaneously with their creation. For this reason the main problem is inability to inventory which makes demand forecasting highly challenging and important. (Zeithaml et al. 2006, 24)

Services can be marketed as industrial and consumer services, depending on what motive a customer has. For example, if a travel agent or an airline sells services to a businessperson, those are industrial or business services, if they sell services to a tourist, those are called consumer services. (Cateora et al. 2009, 353)

“Financial services, hotels, insurance, legal services and others might be classified as either a business or a consumer service” (Cateora et al. 2009, 353).

Top consumer services exports are transportation, financial services, education, telecommunications, entertainment, information, and health care.

Services and goods can complement each other, but nowadays services tend to compete against goods and become an alternative offering (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 470).

2.5.1 Typical international services

Many service-providing companies are already performing actively in international markets, but many more services have potential for internationalization.

Typical international services include: financial services, banking services, construction field services, design, engineering services as well as personnel management and the overall management of project. Such areas as construction, design and engineering services have great potential. Legal and accounting services are also quite popular nowadays. At the same time international demand is increasing rapidly in computer and data services. Management consulting services are provided by firms around the globe, but they are sensitive to the cultural environment and their use varies depending on country and field of expertise. Tourism is a very popular and one of the most important areas of service trade. (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 479)

Moreover, teaching services are developing and expanding abroad. Teaching of knowledge is in high demand and offers new opportunities for growth. Technology tools make it possible for teachers and students to communicate from different parts of the world, have video conferences, e-mail office hours, and distribute Internet-relayed teaching materials. (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 478)

2.5.2 Starting to market services internationally

For many companies the Internet is a good starting point in marketing services internationally. Making a web site allows visitors and potential clients from any place of the world to come and see the offering. Communicating the existence of the site might become a problem, but traditional advertising tools can be used here, such as billboards that announce the Web sites and their benefits. (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 481)

According to Zcinkota & Ronkainen (2010, 481), service providers whose activities are independent from goods must search for market situations that are similar to the domestic market. They should concentrate in their area of expertise.

2.5.3 International trade problems in services

Service marketing is increasing in importance nowadays, but at the same time new problems are appearing in the service sector. For example, there might be problems with collecting data. "The data collected on service trade are quite poor. Service transactions are often "invisible" statistically as well as physically" (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 475).

Gathering information is challenging because services are intangible and therefore it is more difficult to measure and trace them than goods. Another problem is that what is considered to be a service in one country, may be classified as a good in another, as gas and electricity production and distribution are recognized as goods by most governments, but are classified as services in the United States. (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 475)

Two major types of typical obstacles to services trade are barriers to entry and problems in performing services. Governments usually explain the need for barriers to entry by referring to national security and economic security, for example, it concerns banking services. (Zcinkota & Ronkainen 2010, 475)

2.5.4 Brands in international marketing

"A successful brand is the most valuable resource a company has. The brand name encompasses the years of advertising, goodwill, quality evaluations, product experience, and other beneficial attributes the market associates with the product". (Cateora et al. 2009, 360)

Importance and impact of brands depend on the cultural values of consumers. Usually companies that have strong brands tend to use those brands globally.

The Internet and other technologies lead to a quicker globalization of brands. Even if a product is adapted to the local market, a global brand can still be used. A global brand is meant to give a company a positive brand association that leads to efficiency and cost savings when other products with the same brand name are introduced to a new market. But not all companies approve a single brand approach. For instance, some companies prefer to establish country-specific brand names and at the same time have some brands that are promoted worldwide. (Cateora et al. 2009, 361)

2.5.5 Country-of-origin and global brands

Consumers usually associate brands with the value of the product, its quality and prestige. The brand can have a positive or a negative message about the product. There are many factors that can affect the brand such as previous advertising, promotion, product reputation and evaluation. But one of the greatest concerns for the companies that operate worldwide is the country-of-origin effect on the product's perception by consumers. "The country-of-origin effect can be defined as any influence that the country of manufacture, assembly, or design has on a consumer's positive or negative perception of a product". (Cateora et al. 2009, 363)

When a customer becomes aware of the country manufacturing the product, there is a possibility it will affect the brand image or the way customer perceives the product. The country, the type of product, and the image of the company and its brands influence whether the country of origin will have a positive or negative effect. The reasons for that is that consumers usually build stereotypes about products and countries based on previous experience, hearsay, myth, and limited information. (Cateora et al. 2009, 363)

"Consumers have broad but somewhat vague stereotypes about specific countries and specific product categories that they judge "best": English tea, French perfume, Chinese silk, Italian leather, Japanese electronics, Jamaican rum, and so on. Stereotyping of this nature is typically product specific and may not extend to other categories of products from these countries" (Cateora et al. 2009, 363)

Some countries are stereotyped on the basis of whether they are industrialized or developing. In this case consumer's perception of the quality of the goods and services depends more on a general image of the country, for example, industrialized countries have the highest quality image. Ethnocentrism or the "buy local" effect can also have country-of-origin effects. Eth-

nocentrism may influence consumer's opinion about foreign products and can make consumers choose local products. (Cateora et al. 2009, 364)

In Russia, the products are divided into two categories: "ours" and "imported". Consumers in Russia prefer fresh, homegrown food products but choose clothing and electronics from abroad. They also prefer products that are manufactured abroad to goods produced locally by international companies. Thus, for Russian consumers the country of origin is more important than a brand name in terms of indicating the product's quality. (Cateora et al. 2009, 364)

Negative stereotypes and doubts about quality of the products can be overcome but the process may take years (Cateora et al. 2009, 364).

2.6 Social media

Humans have a need to connect to other humans, to be around and share thoughts, ideas, values and experiences with people who share similar attitudes. Media are the technologies people use to make those connections via written words, audio, video, mobile phones, text messaging and web sites. (Safko 2010, 4)

"A social network is a group of people who interact through newsletters, blogs, comments, telephone, e-mail, instant messages, and who use text, audio, photographs, and video for social, professional and educational purposes" (Safko 2010, 24).

Charlesworth (2009, 300) defines social networks as "member-based communities that enable users to link to one another based on common interests and through invites".

According to Safko (2010, 24), the goal of the social network is to create trust in a given community.

A membership life cycle in online social networks starts when a person becomes a member of a community and enters the community life as a visitor, or a lurker. After some time, when members are more comfortable they become novices and start their participation in the community dialogue. After that, having contributed for some period of time, they become regulars. Regulars can become leaders. Members who have been participating in the network for a while but depart for some reason are known as elders. It might take from a few months to more than a year to become an elder. (Safko 2010, 25)

Safko (2010, 25) defines Lurkers as those who observe the community and view the content,

but do not add any comments or content. When they start adding content and add comments, they become novices. Insiders are those, who participate in discussions and add comments regularly.

Leaders, in this case, can be defined as participants who have been contributing to the community for a long time. They not only make comments on other members' content, but also may correct others' behavior. Elders are those who left the network for some reason, for example, because their interests changed or the direction of the community did not suit them anymore. Lack of time or interest can be a reason too. (Safko 2010, 25)

There are various reasons why people join online communities. The most popular reason is to meet new people. Some people are looking for entertainment and others want to learn something new. At the same time there are people who become members in a network to influence others. (Charlesworth 2009, 301)

People contribute to social and knowledge-sharing networks for many different reasons. Usually people are motivated to contribute the information and knowledge to the group because they expect that someone will receive useful help and they will get recognition in return. A sense of contribution is also important for some members of the community. According to social psychology people are social beings and are gratified when they receive responses to their input. When other readers comment on or participate in their content people receive acknowledgment which is very important for them. (Safko 2010, 26)

One way to show how a social network works is to describe a specific social network. For example Facebook is one of the biggest social networks with:

1. About 425 million members
2. More than 35 million users update their status each day
3. More than 3 billion photos are uploaded each month
4. More than 5 billion pieces of content including blog posts, news, web links, notes, photos, and so on, are shared each week
5. More than 3,5 million events are created each month
6. More than 1,5 million businesses have Fan Pages
7. More than 20 million people become "fans" of fan pages every day. (Safko 2010, 27)

2.7 E-mail

E-mail is one of the oldest forms of digital social media and it is a very effective way to stay in touch with your existing customers, help them resolve their problems, find and attract new customers, and develop your network. If a company uses e-mail correctly the number of attracted customers can increase. E-mail can exceed the results achieved by direct mail, newspaper, magazine, radio or television advertising. The Internet allows advertisers to count how many responses their advertisements produce. (Safko 2010, 63)

There are some important elements that should be given enough attention. For example, the sender of the e-mail is the first thing the recipient looks at, so the name of the sender or the name of the company should be clear to reassure recipients that the sender is someone they know or at least trustworthy. If they decide that this is spam, they will delete the e-mail straight away. (Chaffey 2007, 201)

The subject line is the headline seen before opening the message. It should give a short description of the subject of the e-mail based on the content. The main goal of the subject line is to attract attention, since there is always a big competition between e-mails. The first two or three words of the subject line are the most important. When creating the subject line, capital letter should not be used. (Chaffey 2007, 206)

Preview pane is an element in some e-mail programs that allows the recipient to view the first few lines of a message. If a message sounds attractive it may make the recipient open the e-mail.

The rate of opened messages can be useful since it indicates how many recipients opened the e-mail message.

Bounces are the e-mails that did not reach their destination and were bounced back to the sender. In this case the reason for delivery failure should be identified and eliminated.

Hard bounces are the e-mails that have been sent to a domain or e-mail address that no longer exists (or never did). The right and up-to-date address of the recipient should be checked.

Soft bounces are e-mails that were not delivered for a reason of a full mailbox or a down server. In this case the e-mail can be resent again a few days later. (Chaffey 2007, 207)

Content is important not only in web pages and brochures, it is also the most important part of the e-mail and therefore requires much attention. The sender has a few words and very little time to convince the recipient that the e-mail is relevant to them, and they should take

the action it promotes. (Charlesworth 2009, 260)

To be effective and attractive for a potential customer, the e-mail message should clearly specify what the benefits for the customer are. Any potential customer subconsciously calculates if an offer is worth their time and attention. The benefits specified in the e-mail are to convince the customer that a product or a service is a good value. (Safko 2010, 71)

The content is highly important, but the subject line is essential when there is a need to encourage the recipient to even open the e-mail. “The subject line should seek to seek to sell not the product-but the advantage gained by its purchase” (Charlesworth 2009, 301).

2.8 E-mail marketing

E-mail marketing has some benefits compared to traditional direct marketing. Because of its lower cost it is possible to send more and better-targeted messages to recipients, therefore the response percentage can be higher. E-mails can be also sent as reminders about a campaign, sales promotion or event. It is an easy tool to keep in touch with the customers providing them with the up-to-date information. (Chaffey 2007, 9)

Firstly, e-mail marketing offers higher response rates and a shorter duration for campaign creation, since e-mail campaigns can be completed quicker than direct mail. Secondly, responses can be received more quickly whereas direct mail requires a longer response time.

Overall cycle time of an e-mail campaign from creation to delivery and response is much shorter than of traditional direct mail.

One of the main advantages of e-mail marketing is low price of it since e-mails don't require any sufficient resources. In addition, e-mails can be also used for market research. (Chaffey 2007, 9)

E-mail marketing and web-site based marketing

“A major benefit of the web site is that its audience is self-selecting” (Chaffey 2007, 12).

The content of the web-site attract the audience, but the problem is that visitors leaving the web-site may never come back. Here e-mail has its benefit, because it can be used to remind people about the web-site, the company and its products. (Chaffey 2007, 12)

E-mail also wins over a web-site because the sender chooses who gets what information and therefore the communication is more targeted. When a web-site is created the designers have to make it for a range of audiences and it may make it difficult for customers to find exactly what they are looking for and what has been developed for them. But e-mail does not always work better than a web-site. Only a web page can provide customers with deeper and more detailed information. So, e-mail works best when combined with a web page. E-mail can attract and direct customers to a web page where they can find the details they need. (Chaffey 2007, 12)

To create the most suitable structure for an e-mail, it is essential to think from the recipient's point of view. When recipients receive an e-mail, they first of all check who it is from, what benefits they can receive and what they need to do. Those are the questions the recipients should be able to find answers for in the e-mail.

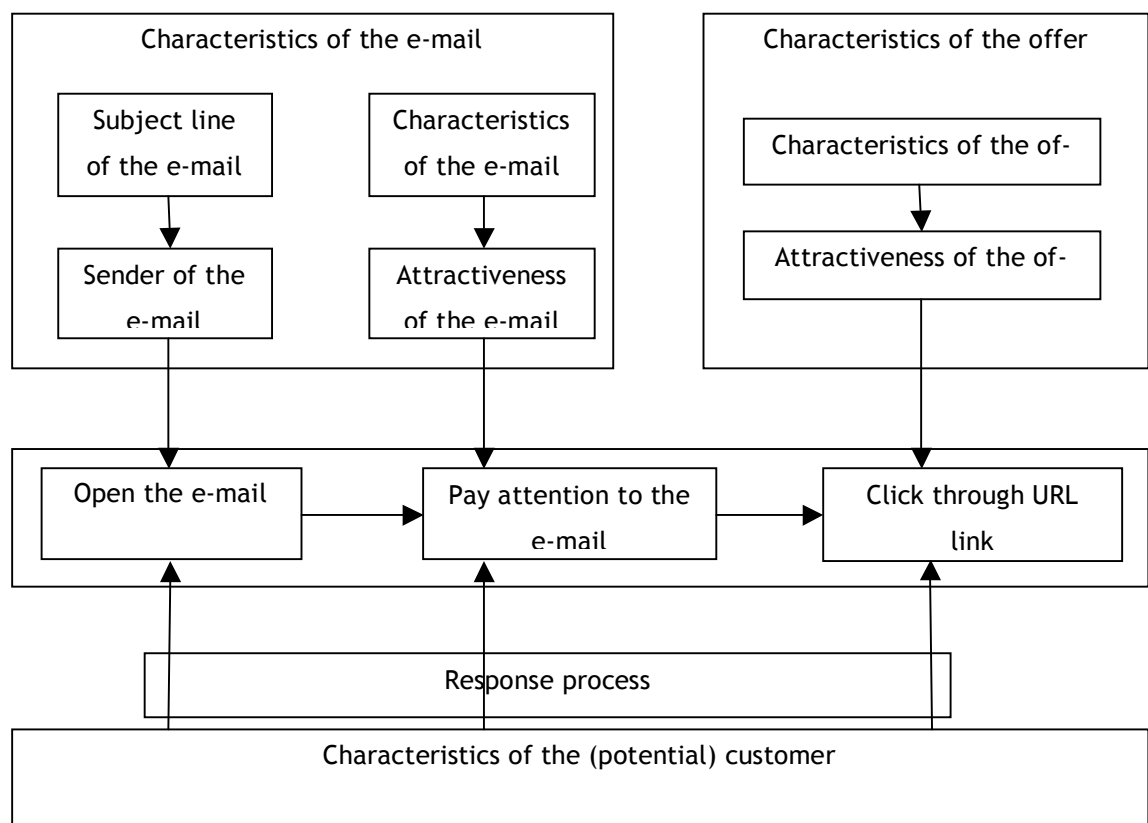


Figure 2: Basic e-mail marketing response (Email Marketing: Ruth Rettie, Success Factors)

The figure shows that e-mail has to have specific characteristics and be attractive to make a recipient open it. The next stage is paying attention, thus e-mail has to carry interesting and useful information and then the third stage is possible, which is response of the recipient.

The e-mail should be built based on the response that is expected to be received. It might be to click a link, to read the e-mail or buy a product depending on the objective of the e-mail. The creator of the e-mail should consider the ways that are going to be used to persuade the readers to act. (Chaffey 2007, 200)

Since a recipient of the e-mail is going to evaluate it based on any perceived advantages the e-mail should show clear benefits for the reader. Moreover, emotional impact plays an important role. The readers' feelings and emotions about the e-mail should be considered. Visual design, imagery and tone of voice are essential in building an image of the offer. (Chaffey 2007, 200)

2.9 Theoretical framework

The theoretical chapter covers ideas and concepts that were used to support the research process.

First of all chapter 2 presents ideas on how to develop the right marketing strategy and what mistakes to avoid when a company wants to market internationally.

Secondly, international marketing communications are described in the chapter, because marketing conditions and differences in culture and language make the international marketing process more complicated and exchanging the information between the company and customers becomes challenging. There are some ideas given in the chapter on how to overcome the difficulties.

Moreover, CRM (Customer Relationship Management) is included in the theoretical chapter, since the goal of every company is not only to get a customer or a partner, but also to develop long-lasting and profitable relationship with them and CRM is a good tool for this process.

Process of marketing consumer services is described in the chapter, because services differ from products and are produced, offered and evaluated differently. The chapter also describes how to start marketing services internationally and what problems a company may have to cope with.

Branding and its importance for a company are also mentioned in the chapter. The country where the product or service were produced as well as how they are evaluated by customers has a great meaning for any company and its image in the market.

Social media is described in the theoretical framework in order to give a better understanding of the case study, on which the research is based.

E-mail marketing is presented thoroughly in the chapter 2, because it describes how to combine a successful e-mail which is going to be used for the research purposes.

3 Research approach

This chapter describes the methodology that was used by the author in order to achieve the goals of the research.

First of all, before the research process, it was decided to compile and send an initial e-mail to the contact persons of 23 universities in Russia (Please, see the list of the universities in Appendix I). The e-mail included general information on Finland, Laurea University of Applied Sciences and information about Massidea.org.

A week later one more e-mail with more detailed information about Massidea.org was sent to the same universities to remind them about the offer. The proposal included details on what opportunities for cooperation Massidea.org offers to its partners, such as E-learning, virtual internships, common projects and collaboration of courses. Pdf (portable document format) files were attached to the proposal describing the details.

After 2 weeks the author of the study contacted the representatives of the universities by telephone to receive feedback on the offer. The goal was to define why or why not the universities would be interested to accept the offered partnership, what benefits they see as essential and what, in their opinion, is missing from the offer.

3.1 Research approaches

There are two types of research methods that can be used in a study: quantitative and qualitative approaches. The choice of approach for a study depends on the purpose and needs of the research as well as time resources. (Qualitative versus quantitative research: key points in a classic debate, 2007)

The figure 3 shows that the usage of the quantitative approach allows a researcher to gather information from a large group of people. Structured interviews with close-ended questions should be used for collecting data which can be generalized.

Qualitative	Quantitative
The aim is a complete, detailed description	The aim is to classify features, count them
Researcher may only know roughly in advance what he/she is looking for	Researcher knows clearly in advance what he/she is looking for
The design emerges as the study unfolds	All aspects of the study are carefully designed before data is collected
Researcher is the data gathering instrument	Researcher uses tools, such as questionnaires
Data is in the form of words	Data is in the form of numbers and statistics
Qualitative data is more deep, time consuming	Quantitative data is more efficient but may miss contextual detail

Figure 3: Features of qualitative and quantitative research (Qualitative versus quantitative research: key points in a classic debate, 2007)

Qualitative approach can be used for gathering deeper information. Interviews with open-ended questions can be used for the purpose of collecting data and it usually leads to further discussion of a topic. Qualitative approach helps a researcher to explore opinions, attitudes and behavior of respondents.

In this thesis qualitative research method was chosen in order to analyze the steps and actions undertaken within the study. The reason for this choice is the fact that qualitative research is more flexible and reveals deeper information than a quantitative one, moreover, it leads to findings that were not planned in advance and lets respondents express their views, ideas and opinions freely, which helps to understand the reasons that stand behind the decisions and actions.

Respondents' feelings and motivation are important for the study and can be captured only by qualitative research. Quantitative research does not indicate needs and wishes of the respondents that are essential since they may result in generating new ideas for improvements of the offer. It is especially of high importance when the product or service is new and innovative. Investigation of its weaknesses and strengths will contribute to its successful development.

On the other hand, qualitative research can not be used to provide statistical validation.

3.2 Interviews

An interview was chosen as a method of gathering information, because it makes it possible to receive full answers from the interviewees and it allows the clarification of possible unclear questions or misunderstandings as soon as they appear.

A large amount of detail can be revealed during an interview and moreover, if a personal connection between an interviewer and an interviewee is established, there is an opportunity to receive more sensitive information.

On the other hand, the amount of time that is needed for an interview is a disadvantage of it. There is also a challenge for the interviewer not to lose focus during the discussion since answering one question may lead to many other questions that are not relevant for the study.

There are different factors that influence the validity of the interviews, such as nervousness of interviewees, confusion, misinterpretation of the questions. The information provided by an interviewee may not be true due to numerous different factors.

The interviews were undertaken by telephone which seemed appropriate because of the physical distance between the interviewer and the respondents; moreover it gave a chance to gather information rapidly.

The interviewees were the staff personnel of the Russian universities divided into two groups of international coordinators and lecturers.

Main set of questions was prepared in advance (the list of questions can be found in Appendix II). But during the interviews new questions arose, which helped to get a better picture of respondents' opinions and reasons for their choices.

Before the interviews started, the author introduced herself and Massidea.org and made sure that the respondents had received the information and materials about Massidea.org previously.

After that the purpose and the format of the interview were explained to the respondents.

Questions used in the interviews were simple and clear and only one question at a time was asked in order not to lose focus of the discussion.

The author of the study tried to remain neutral and did not let her opinions interfere with the views of the interviewees. At the same time the interviewer tried to encourage the respondents and discussion.

The interviews were semi-structured and were followed by an informal discussion, which also contributed to the research.

International coordinators were interviewed in order to receive their evaluation of the offer for cooperation and to determine how suitable it was from their point of view.

Lecturers were asked about their views on possible integration of Massidea activities into the study plan of the university.

All the respondents were asked to express their general opinions and thoughts as well as to give possible recommendations or comments. The discussion was organized with the aim to indicate their point of view on the possibilities for implementing Massidea activities and to identify the expectations they had. Moreover it was important to recognize the main reasons in making decisions whether to start cooperation or decline the offer.

The interviews provided the author of the thesis with the necessary information about the attractiveness of the offer of Massidea and gave a general overview of the process of decision-making in the universities in Russia.

3.3 Reliability and validity

Reliability is the consistency or repeatability of the measurement. Reliability can not be measured, it can only be estimated by receiving the same results or scores of the same test several times (The Layman's Guide to Social Research Methods 1997).

It is challenging to estimate reliability of a qualitative research, since interpretation of the results of such research are often subjectively interpreted and may include mistakes.

There are some steps though that can be taken in order to increase reliability of qualitative research, for example, a researcher should be an "outsider" without special status. Past experiences are important for the researcher in order to better understand the process or responds (Reliability of Qualitative Research Findings). Both of these two requirements were met in this research. Moreover all data used in the study is from reliable sources, including theoretical sources and data that were obtained during the interviews and discussions.

Validity is defined as the extent to which a test measures what it should measure.

There are also possibilities for mistakes and errors, for instance, if the researcher misunderstands the research questions or if the respondents don't understand the questions they are asked (Nicholas 2008, 171).

To ensure a higher level of validity the researcher of this study used the respondents' language for the interviews. And the interviews were conducted in natural conditions for the respondents - at their usual working places.

Results can be also validated by conducting several interviews, which was done in this research.

4 Empirical study

4.1 Case: Massidea.org

The Massidea project was started in January 2009 and was developed by European Social Fund. It is maintained in Laurea University of Applied Sciences by Teemu Santonen (Principal Lecturer at Laurea University of Applied Sciences, Ph.D). At the moment Massidea has 12 partner Universities. (www.massidea.org/en)

4.1.1 Objectives of Massidea

The main objective of the Massidea concept is the creation of innovations, which can be achieved by generating and sharing new ideas, discussing challenges and visions.

For these purposes a web site www.massidea.org has been created. Users can register on the web page, create their accounts and add content, discuss ideas and challenges as well as make comments to visions of other users.

For potential partners among Russian universities a proposal has been created that offers four types of collaboration: virtual internships (see Appendix III), E-learning, common projects and collaboration between courses (see Appendix IV).

4.1.2 Target groups

There were four groups of universities that needed to be contacted. First of all, Russian partner universities of Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Second of all, Russian partner universities of other Finnish Universities and Russian partner universities of Massidea's partners. Universities that were not partners were identified and contacted as well.

4.1.3 Benefits for partners of Massidea.org

Massidea offers collaboration that can be beneficial for students of the universities in Russia and Finland. The main benefits are:

- 1) Studying in an international environment
- 2) Improving English Language skills
- 3) Increasing awareness of other cultures
- 4) Developing Innovative thinking
- 5) Creation of new business ideas
- 6) Developing the problem solving skills.

The main benefits for teachers are:

- 1) A new way of teaching
- 2) A good opportunity to expand the educational process
- 3) Working in an international environment
- 4) Possibility for motivating students for good results
- 5) Open mentoring, access to comments and arguments
- 6) Discussion of nowadays problems
- 7) Collaboration between people.

4.2 Russia

Political and economic changes in Russia have influenced different aspects of life. Currently, innovative technologies are being developed and widely used in different spheres of life in Russia.

Internet communications are developing rapidly and new services are being introduced constantly. The appearance of new Internet providers makes Internet services more affordable for people and thus the access to the Internet is much easier than before.

The educational system is one of the fields where modern technologies are being successfully implemented in order to improve the quality of the teaching process. A new educational approach includes new information technologies and the Internet which allow students to use web-sites for searching information, make teleconferences and participate in distance education courses.

The Internet and information technologies provide students and teachers with many opportunities for improving communication and foreign language skills, expand a network of contacts and develop professional knowledge and abilities.

4.2.1 General information about Russia

Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of area. It is located in northeastern Europe and northern Asia. The area of its territory is about 17.1 million square kilometers.

The population of Russia is about 140 million inhabitants, 80% of which are ethnic Russians; other nationalities include Tatar, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Moldavian, Kazakh and others.

The capital of Russia is Moscow, the largest city in the country. The population of Moscow is about 11 million inhabitants. St. Petersburg is the cultural capital of Russia and its population is 4.7 million. The official language is Russian, its currency is the Russian ruble. The current Head of State is President Dmitriy Medvedev, and the government is headed by the Prime Minister Vladimir Putin (Russia. Facts and Figures)

4.2.2 System of higher education in Russia

Higher education in Russia is provided by two types of institutions: Public (State) universities and Non-public (Non-State) universities that need accreditation (the right to issue degrees after the quality of instruction is measured).

The system of higher education in Russia has been undergoing change for the past few years. The system of education should become similar to of Europe and the USA where students study four years for the Bachelor's degree and then two years for the Master's degree. But these changes are still in process, some universities still offer the old five-year system of education.

Entry requirements for Russian universities include completed secondary level education and entry examinations. Most students need additional preparation to get admission to the university, because knowledge acquired in school is usually not enough, which is why many students attend preparatory courses.

Higher education in Russia is officially free of charge. But this means that only an established number, or quota, of students can be admitted on a free of charge basis. This quota depends

on the budget of the university. Universities have a right to enroll students on a fee-paying basis regulating the fee for their programs by themselves.

The programs of universities are established in accordance with the State Educational Standards which regulate almost 80% of their content. The other 20% are established by universities. The program consists of professional and special courses in Science, the Humanities and Social-economic disciplines, professional training, completion of a research project and passing State final exams. (Educational System in Russia 2003)

There are four types of higher education institutions in Russia:

- 1) Universities. They are occupied with providing education and research possibilities in different disciplines
- 2) Academies. They are responsible for education and research only in one single discipline
- 3) Institutes usually specialize in one field but with different disciplines
- 4) Private Institutions provide education in such fields as business, culture or sociology, but not engineering. (Russian Education System)

4.3 Cooperation between Finland and Russia

International cooperation in Russia started relatively late due to ideological and political issues during the Soviet period. About 20 years ago universities started to establish contacts with foreign partners.

Nowadays international cooperation is developing in Russia, international seminars are held, centers and associations of international cooperation are created and international networks are developed.

Russia and Finland are neighbors and educational institutions have already established various cooperating relationships between the countries.

For example, the number of students and teachers participating in mobility within Erasmus Mundus program has been increasing.

FIRST is Finnish-Russian Student Exchange Program which provides students from Russia and Finland with opportunities for exchange studies from 3 to 12 month. This organization also supports students financially during the exchange period.

A joint degree is a program developed jointly by two or several universities is gaining its popularity. Students spend some part of their studies abroad and get two diplomas. The right name for this program is double degree.

Students can also apply for internships abroad. There are various trainee exchange programs for students. In Finland CIMO is responsible for training programs and provides assistance and advice for applicants. In Russia AIESEC (the world's largest student organization) is responsible for these services. (AIESEC. From the Member Perspective 2009)

International cooperation between Higher education Institutions is oriented towards preparing students for future needs of the international labor market. Students acquire necessary skills, such as communication and language skills, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, ability to get accustomed to a new intercultural environment. (Matijasevic & Caric 2009)

4.4 SWOT analysis

To give a broad picture of possibilities and challenges of cooperation between Russian and Finnish universities, a SWOT analysis was combined by the author (see Figure 4.)

The SWOT analysis figure shows the main opportunities that can support the idea of international cooperation. For example, information technologies, as has been said before, allow easier communication and information exchange. Wide partner networks help to identify and contact new potential partners. On the other hand, lack of financial resources can not be easily overcome and remains a problem in cooperation possibilities. Cultural aspects influence the decision-making process and sometimes lead to misunderstandings.

But technological progress and growing interest toward foreign cultures and languages should help to develop more international cooperation possibilities and broaden the existing networks. Adopting the common educational system with compatible degrees and courses would produce more opportunities for collaboration. Common system of credits is important for the students and could become a motivating aspect for them.

In general, promoting the attractiveness and importance of international cooperation to the staff and students can lead to more interest towards foreign countries, cultures, and educational cooperation.

Strengths	Weaknesses
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Wide partner network Geographical location between the countries Good practice of previous cooperation projects Access to Information technologies High level of education in both countries Motivation of students and teachers Modern study environment	Language differences Cultural aspect Differences in education systems The degrees are not completely compatible yet Study credits earned in Finnish universities are sometimes not recognized by Russian universities Not enough financial recourses Visas and residence permits Economical situation in Russia
Opportunities	Threats
Developing of cooperation and relations between the countries Improving communication between the universities Growing interest for foreign culture and languages Technological progress	Possible future changes in educational system Tuition fees Absence of funding or grants

Figure 4: SWOT analysis of international cooperation between higher education institutions in Finland and Russia (compiled by the author)

4.5 Analysis results

In this chapter the results obtained during the research are discussed. The research was meant to answer the main question of the thesis as well as to obtain additional information that could contribute to the study as well as to be used for future researches.

Data was collected during the interviews with the staff of the universities.

4.5.1 The offer

The interviews showed that the offer to Russian universities to cooperate within the activities of Massidea.org managed to attract interest, but there were obstacles to accepting the offer by the universities.

One of the most common reasons for rejecting the offer was lack of funding. Russian universities get very limited financial support from the government and international grants are usually unavailable to them. Moreover the state has recently cut the funding of state universities and for universities it means that they need to find other financial resources and be careful

with allocating them. That is why starting cooperation with Massidea.org seemed risky in terms of financial resources.

In addition, the Massidea concept is new and implementing its activities could be time and effort consuming, which again needs a financial base to reimburse the extra work of people responsible for the process.

Another reason for rejecting the offer was lack of time in the end of the study year, when some international coordinators are already on vacation whereas others are occupied with applications of incoming and outgoing exchange students and other current issues.

Some interviewees expressed their concerns about a possibility of applying the activities of Massidea successfully in a Russian university. The reason for this concern is the fact that the system of Higher education in Russia is different from the one in Europe, moreover it is being changed at the moment. The uncertainty about how to adapt Massidea to local system stops universities from participating in a new international activity.

4.5.2 Language

During the research it was indicated that not all the universities have personnel with good English language skills. All studies in Russian universities are held in the Russian language. This was one of the obstacles for marketing Massidea.org in Russia, since all the information and materials were in English. International coordinators should have enough knowledge of the English language, but interviews determined that people responsible for decision-making would have been more interested in the offer if the materials had been communicated to them in the Russian language. Since the information was in English, some employees needed assistance in translating the main idea as well as details of the materials. This lack of language skills might have lead to misinterpretation and misunderstandings of the facts.

4.5.3 Communication

The main conclusion regarding communication process is that e-mails are not enough in communicating with Russian universities, and especially when there is a need to get feedback. The response rate was very low that is why a decision was made to contact the universities by telephone first to remind about the proposal and then to interview the staff concerning Massidea.org.

E-mails, nevertheless, should be used as well, since it is an easy and fast way to send information and documents. Moreover e-mails let react to any possible requests very quickly.

Success of communication depends on the knowledge and experience, including cultural awareness, of the person responsible for making contacts. Knowledge of the educational systems and their differences, as well as good command of the Russian language and ability to communicate the information clearly are essential when trying to market educational services to Russia.

The results of the research showed that it was easier to communicate with the universities that were already partners with Laurea University of Applied Sciences or had other partners among Finnish Universities. They expressed more interest in discussion and provided important information in their feedback.

Despite the fact that most universities found the possibility of implementing Massidea activities challenging, the feedback they provided stated that the offer itself is innovative and interesting. They also mentioned that the information about Massidea and benefits of possible cooperation were clear.

4.5.4 Organizational structure

One of the challenges in marketing Massidea.org was the organizational structure of Russian universities and lack of information exchange between the employees.

The observations made by the author during the telephone interviews showed that there is no information exchange between the international coordinators in the same university. Usually an international office includes several employees and each has their own e-mail address. If the e-mail was received by one employee, the information does not go further to others.

Both, internal (between employees) and external (between the university and its stakeholders) communications are essential for good performance of the international office of any university.

Lack of communication leads to lack of information and misunderstandings which may become a reason for a lower performance of the employees.

The reason for poor communication might be the fact that people tend to process the received information by themselves and not to share it with the colleagues.

Free flow of relevant information should be ensured in universities. Information should be available to the employees and all possible problems and ideas should be communicated to the management in order for them to be able to find solutions or make the right decisions.

Feedback and the sharing ideas should be a part of the working environment of any organization, including universities, where information is a base for knowledge development.

To summarize the feedback that was gathered during the interviews about the Massidea.org offer to collaborate, it can be said that Massidea.org has potential and if implemented successfully can be beneficial to all participants.

Its activities can provide an opportunity of interactive communication of professors and students from different countries, which is a very useful experience that can lead to creating new ideas.

Taking part in this cooperation would give students an opportunity to improve their language and communication skills. Moreover this concept allows the participants to discuss common educational questions and find solutions to existing problems. Students would get a higher motivation to achieve better results.

International collaboration helps to reveal hidden resources and stimulates innovative thinking. One of the benefits is developing the sense of responsibility and desire to share ideas, knowledge and experience.

Most of the respondents were sure that new educational methods lead to positive results in the educational process.

There is a risk of failure when marketing abroad and even though the Russian universities have not yet agreed to cooperate with Massidea, but they expressed an interest and shared their thoughts on the offer that had been made to them. This proves that Massidea has big chances and potential to develop and expand.

5 Research conclusions and recommendation for future research

In this chapter the main conclusions are made and recommendations for future work are provided.

The objective of the study was to determine the best way to contact Russian university in order to market Massidea.org activities to them and establish long-lasting and fruitful cooperation between the universities in the future.

The results showed that the offer itself was successful and attracted attention. The universities recognize the benefits of potential collaboration and think that educational process can be developed by implementing Massidea.org activities.

But among the goals of the thesis was also the determination of possible complications and difficulties in the process of international marketing and the study managed to reveal some of the obstacles and aims to provide recommendations and advice on how to overcome them, improving the offer that could be used with a bigger success in the future.

Based on the results achieved during the research, it can be concluded that it is challenging to undertake marketing activities in Russia due to several factors.

The results showed that one of the main problems is the language. To overcome this difficulty the author of the thesis can recommend the use of the Russian language when contacting the universities and to provide the universities with materials translated into the Russian language. To avoid possible misinterpretations the choice of words should be correct. This way the language barrier can be eliminated which will lead to higher interest from the universities and less possibilities for misunderstandings.

Another problem identified during the research was lack of communication between the international coordinators of the same university. Employees do not share the information they receive which leads to the situation when decision-making depends only on one person. In this case the author could recommend that all international coordinators should be contacted, Also their assistances as well as the head of the international department should receive materials in order to make sure that information reaches the right persons.

In addition, it can be recommended to not only send e-mails, but also call the persons, responsible for the international cooperation after two or three days to confirm that they received the materials and agree on the date when it would be possible to contact them again to discuss the offer. Otherwise international coordinators might lose interest to the proposal due to the amount of work they have.

One of the major problems, which influenced the decision-making process was financial aspect. That obstacle became crucial in the decision-making process and was the reason for most universities to reject the offer for collaboration. Unfortunately, the author can not provide any advice or recommendation on this issue, but can only hope that there would be a possibility to apply for funding for developing cooperation with universities in Russia. So far this funding is unavailable for Russian universities.

6 Theoretical linkage

The theoretical sector was constructed based on the goals and needs of the research study. It was used to provide solid knowledge that was used to compile the offer that was communicated to the Russian universities. The knowledge was applied in the research of the study by finding a suitable way to contact the universities. Methods described in the theoretical sector allowed the author to develop the offer and provided her with ideas for the suggestions and recommendations for improving international marketing process in Russia.

7 Final words

7.1 Personal learning output

The author of the thesis had already had some experience in the field of international marketing before starting to write this study. The author was familiar with some areas of international marketing communications since work as an international assistant in Laurea University of Applied Sciences in the year 2010 became a good base for obtaining the necessary knowledge.

However, the process of writing the thesis was neither easy nor smooth. Organizational aspects were challenging for the author which resulted in some changes in the schedule.

Communication and data collection problems interfered with the process of writing the thesis. Identifying the right contact persons in the universities was challenging due to the lack of information on the web pages of the universities. Moreover, due to the large number of employees in the international departments some information could not be communicated correctly. Several attempts were made before the information and materials reached the recipients.

The response rate was very low at the beginning and that was an obstacle that was overcome by personal telephone calls to the representative of the universities.

Nevertheless, all the obstacles and problems taught the author to find solutions and make decisions quickly.

The process of coping with difficulties contributed to the writer's abilities to work according to the schedule.

Moreover, the study contributed to the author's professional and personal development.

New knowledge in the field of international marketing, e-mail marketing and service promotion was obtained by the other while reading and choosing the literature on these topics.

Practical skills and experience are valuable and are achieved through the implementation of the research. Data gathering and implementing the analysis was a new and valuable experience for the writer.

Communication skills of the author were developed due to the need of contacting and communicating with representatives of the universities. Preparing the questions and conducting the interviews was a challenging, but at the same time, very interesting and productive process.

Time management skills and organizational skills were developed by planning the activities and following the schedule.

In conclusion, the author can state that writing the thesis resulted in a valuable contribution to her professional experience and personal development.

7.2 Further research suggestions

This study mostly concerned how to market Massidea.org in order to establish the relationship between the universities in the future. For the next possible research the author would suggest a topic of building trust between the partners in an network, since trust is a key factor of any cooperation.

In addition, it would be beneficial to research how to build solid communication and develop common activities within a network.

Improving information exchange in a university as well as between different universities could be an interesting aspect to research.

7.3 Summary

The aims and goals that were established in the beginning of the study were achieved. The central question of the thesis was answered, information gathered, results analyzed and presented. Moreover, the recommendations on how to improve the offer for the Russian universities were given by the author.

Hopefully, future research will be undertaken and the results will contribute to the development of Massidea.org.

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Appendices

Appendix I Questions for the interview

- 1) Have you already had an international cooperation with universities abroad?
- 2) What was your first impression about Massidea.org?
- 3) Do you think participating in massidea.org activities could be beneficial to the universities?
- 4) What is your opinion about the offer that was sent to you? Is the information useful and clear?
- 5) What opportunities do you see in a possible cooperation with Massidee.org?
- 6) What challenges do you see in this cooperation?
- 7) What factors influenced your decision?
- 8) Do you have any additional comments?

Appendix II List of the contacted universities

- 1) Kazan State Technical University
- 2) Plekhanov Russian Academy of Economics
- 3) St. Petersburg Academy of Management and Economics
- 4) St. Petersburg State University of Information Technologies, Mechanics and Optics (ITMO)
- 5) St. Petersburg State University of Service and Economics
- 6) The Ural State University of Economics
- 7) Ural State Technical University (USTU-UPI)
- 8) Arkhangelsk State Technical University
- 9) Bashkir State University
- 10) North-West State Technical University of Russia
- 11) Petrozavodsk State University
- 12) St Petersburg State University
- 13) Murmansk State Technical University
- 14) North-West Academy of Public Administration, St. Petersburg
- 15) St Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance (FINEC)
- 16) Syktyvkar Forest Institute
- 17) Nizhny Novgorod State Technical University
- 18) Irkutsk State Technical Universities
- 19) Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics
- 20) Moscow Technical University of Informatics and Communication
- 21) St. Petersburg State University of Telecommunication
- 22) Tver state university
- 23) Volgograd State Technical University



Virtual Internship in Massidea.org project

What is Massidea.org?

When wide range of people and their different but complimentary insights are brought together, novel ideas generated by thinking outside the box are possible. Massidea.org is an open innovation community for sharing challenges, ideas and visions; key factors when creating new innovations. It boosts individual and communal creativity by intelligently connecting people, public, private and educational sector organizations and their insights. Massidea.org is also free open source solution and it is publicly available for use and modifications.

Massidea.org project is founded and coordinated in Finland and totally it has collected over 1.6 MEUR funding from European Social Fund (ESF). According to the Global Competitiveness Report 2009-2010 Finland is not only ranked number one in higher education and training indicators but also ranked number three in innovation indicator. Moreover, in year 2008 Massidea.org was rewarded as the best school related innovation by the Finnish Inventor Support Association. Laurea which is coordinating the project is the most awarded University of Applied Sciences in Finland. Massidea.org offers various virtual internship possibilities for technology, business and marketing students. More information is available at www.massidea.org and www.massidea.org/blog

What is Virtual internship?

Virtual internship is founded on active usage of information and communication technologies (ICT). The purpose of virtual internship is to carry out an identifiable and meaningful work based task, which fits within the student's compulsory educational curriculum.

During the virtual internship students will become an active team member of a foreign country project and perform the predefined tasks from their home country with the help of various ICT tools. Depending on the tasks, students are interacting daily and weekly bases with other team members and project related actors. A dedicated contact person from hosting university Laurea is named to each trainee. Contact person is responsible for setting and monitoring the fulfilment of the defined tasks and helps a student to join in the project. While conducting the project tasks, students learn applying theories in practice and delivering genuine results instead of counting how many hours they have spend. Detailed technologies, tools and project tasks for technology and/or marketing oriented virtual internship in Massidea.org project are provided in request.

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Leverage from
the ELL

Massidea.org related scientific publication

These publication are provided in request.

1. Introduction to National Open Innovation System (NOIS) Paradigm: A Preliminary Concept for Interchange, Santonen, T., Kaivo-oja, J., Suomala, J., (2007) FFRC eBooks 8/2007. Finland Futures Research Centre, Turku School of Economics. Turku.
2. Brief Introduction to the National Open Innovation System (NOIS) Paradigm: Supporting individual creativity in an online social network with content recommendation, Santonen, T., Suomala, J., Kaivo-Oja, J., (2008) in: Open Innovation: Creating Products and Services through Collaboration. Tours, France, 15 - 18 June 2008.
3. Brief Intorduction to National Open Innovation System (NOIS) Paradigm: Integrating Online Social Networks and the Triple Helix Model, Santonen, T., Kaivo-Oja, J., Suomala, J., (2008) in: The 6th International Conference on Politics and Information Systems, Technologies and Applications: PISTA 2008, Orlando, Florida, USA, June 29th – July 2nd 2008, pp.126-131.
4. National Open Innovation System (NOIS): Defining a Solid Reward Model for NOIS Santonen, T., Kaivo-Oja, J., Antikainen, M., (2008) in: The 1st ISPIM Innovation Symposium - Managing Innovation in a Connected World -Singapore on 14-17 December 2008.
5. Creating the Foundations for Mass Innovation: Implementing National Open Innovation System (NOIS) as a Part of Higher Education Santonen, T., (2009) in: The 2nd ISPIM Innovation Symposium - Stimulating Recovery - The Role of Innovation Management, New York City, USA on 6-9 December 2009
6. An Idealet-centric Scheme for Large Scale Open Innovation Systems, Hämäläinen, M., Li, Q., Lin, Z, Tomoiaga, A., (2009) in: 8th Workshop on eBusiness, Phoenix 2009
7. Higher education student's motivation to participate in online mass innovation, Santonen, T., Lehtelä, M., (2010), in The XXI ISPIM Conference - The Dynamics of Innovation - Bilbao, Spain on 6-9 June 2010
8. Open Innovation in a Systemic Innovation Context: Analyzing Online Mass Innovation Process from Systemic Perspectives, Kaivo-oja, J., Santonen, T., (2010) in The Open Innovation Research Seminar Kouvola, Finland, 23 August 2010
9. Massidea.org – A Greener Way to Innovate, Santonen (fortcoming) in Green Technologies in Food Production and Processing (Editors:) Joyce Boye and Yves Arcand

A0080/MHA 1022 Intercultural Approach to Service Field

SCHEDULE

NB: Modifications of the schedule during the course are possible.

Preliminary assignments ready for the 1st contact session

1. Acquiring the Theoretical Background: Students will find current articles (not older than 5 years) by conducting a search on Ebsco or Elsevier database using the following keyword: *intercultural service*. Students will choose three (3) most interesting articles, and write a short blog entry based on them.
 2. Each student will think back on their personal service experiences and concentrate on analysing how cultural differences have surfaced in these events. A short narrative report is written based on these experiences in the blog.
-

1st Contact session 19th of January 2011 from 9am to 12:30

- A lecture on Massidea (Teemu Santonen and Satu Ståhlstedt)
 - o What is Massidea? What are the benefits of using Massidea? How does Massidea work?
 - How a problem description is submitted to Massidea.org ? How to comment constructively?
 - Participation in Massidea.org questionnaire.
-

Each student enters their description in Massidea.org and comments on at least 2 other problem descriptions in Massidea.org before the next lecture.

Each student pair (2 persons) will prepare together a podcast or a video as described in the separate assignment paper.

2nd Contact session 26th of January 2011 from 9am to 12:30

- Effective cross-commenting in Massidea.org.

- Preparation of an idea description.
- Podcast/Video presentations (separate instructions)
- Discussion on Intercultural differences concerning customer service expectations

Each student enters the individual idea description in Massidea.org. The deadline is on the 31st of January at 12.00 am. Moreover, Each student comments on each other's ideas. The deadline is on the 1st of February at 8.00 pm

3rd Contact session 2nd of February 2011 from 9am to 12:30

- Groups are formed
 - Individual ideas are promoted with groups (Learning Cafe)
 - ➔ Top 5 ideas are chosen
 - ➔ Each group will develop the idea into a concept in the following weeks 6-7.

NB. On weeks 6 and 7, no lectures will be held. Meanwhile each group prepares:

- a report on the chosen concept. The draft has to be submitted on Massidea by the 11th of February on 4 pm.
- their elevator speech
- comments on other groups' concept drafts by the 15th of February on 8 pm.
- submit the final version of their concept to Massidea. The deadline is on the 18th of February at 4 pm.

4th Contact session on 23rd of February from 9am to 12:30

- Elevator Speech
- Feedback from Entrepreneurs
- Skype-conference with our partners from abroad

5th Contact session on 23rd of February from 9am to 12:30

- Feedback on the course submitted to Massidea
- Massidea interviews are held after the 2nd of March (Students will receive credits only after successfully participating in the interviews.)